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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: April 8, 1956 - Jidda

EXCISE

1) Saudi-American Cooperation
2) Buraimi
3) Yemen
4) Syria
5) St. John Philby

PARTICIPANTS:

His Majesty King Saud with Royal Councilors, Ambassador Midebeth with Embassy Arab Councilors, Muhammad Massoud, who also acted as interpreter.

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1) After compliments, I opened the conversation by expressing my appreciation for His Majesty's message saying he would receive me prior to my departure for Washington on consultation. I believed that my visit could further the interests of our two countries which His Majesty and I had discussed for several months. This was the sense of the reply (see copy annexed) which I had received.

His Majesty, I said, had many times assured me and given proof of his friendship for my country. I remembered particularly his remarks to General Bunker Hunt two years ago in Buraida.

But, he had added, your country, too, has reciprocated.

At this, I concluded, that I wished to present our common interests. If there were any special messages I could take from the President to do so. I had mentioned Dhahran Airfield and from Mr. Hoover asking me to return had indicated the interest of our Defense Department on that question; that the State Department would wish to discuss and all questions of common interest.

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3) Arms. I opened discussion on this point by saying, in substance, that, as I saw it, Washington had two policies. One, which was of immediate concern because of the threatening Palestine situation, was to prevent, in the interests of peace, an arms race between Arabs and Jews. The other was based on our long-time, often repeated desire to contribute towards strengthening the Saudi army to the end that it be able effectively to maintain internal security and, in the event of war, defend itself and contribute to the defense of the area.

It was, I said, in the second connection that I hoped my visit to Washington would be helpful. Saudi Arabia had already bought between \$20 million and \$30 million worth of arms from USG. Today it had asked to buy another \$30 million to \$40 million worth of arms and equipment needed to supply its

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army under the Five-Year Plan which had been elaborated by our Military Mission in collaboration with His Majesty's officers. Another like amount would be needed to complete the Plan. I would, in Washington, hope to obtain assurance that these arms would be delivered in accordance with the annual scheduling of that Plan.

I asked if I might say in Washington that this would be agreeable to His Majesty.

[REDACTED] I answered Saudi Arabia was not alone. We neither gave nor sold any arms to any country which was not ready for them.

[REDACTED] I asked: "Is it a condition to ask that purchases be made as provided by the Five-Year Plan?" I could say there was no change in our policy. I had told him, on instructions from Washington, that USG wished to continue to assist in strengthening his army.

[REDACTED] In reply, I endeavored to explain: His Majesty had sent word to me in Washington over two years ago by Shaikh Asad that he wanted me to work on a Five-Year Plan. I had been doing so. It was a plan designed to build the best possible army in five years, within what we conceived to be the country's capabilities.

Prince Mishaal, on the other hand, I continued, saw things on a larger plane. I had said his five "phases" -- of which our Five-Year Plan was but the first phase -- could be realized but it would take more time. I would say, too, that, if the Five-Year Plan could be realized more quickly we would be as happy as would be His Majesty.

The King.

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The King answered that he understood my position, but he wanted to make three important points. He said:

[REDACTED]

At this point His Majesty consulted with Shaikh Yusuf, following which I was asked and replied to three questions Yusuf had drafted, as follows:

a) Are you ready to offer all arms and equipment called for by the Five-Year Plan? I answered that that, in principle, had always been our policy and that I hoped the Plan could be realized in less than five years.

b) Are you ready to offer all arms and equipment called for by the five phases? I replied that I believed the answer would be "Yes, as soon as Saudi Arabia is ready for them."

c) If Saudi Arabia needs more arms than are included in the Five-Year Plan, are you ready to sell them to Saudi Arabia?

I had begun to reply to Yusuf's third question something to the effect that "if Saudi Arabia needed such arms for its own use..." when His Majesty interrupted to say,

[REDACTED]

His Majesty then left for sunset prayers, asking me to await his return. Upon his return, I asked if Muhammad Effendi might recapitulate what I had said on the question of arms. His Majesty concurring Muhammad did so. We then passed to other subjects.

[REDACTED]

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George Wadsworth
U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia

4/30/56

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Muhammad Effendi

Jidda, March 31, 1956

FROM: The Ambassador

SUBJECT: Answer to His Majesty's Message saying he will receive me April
2 or 3 in Jidda.

Please present my compliments to Shaikh Ibrahim with my thanks for his message and my request that a reply in the following sense be sent to His Majesty:

The American Ambassador, with respects, thanks Your Majesty warmly for the message which I delivered to him today.

His Government is particularly glad that he is to have audience with Your Majesty before returning to Washington for consultation.

It authorizes him to say that, in the light of its close and friendly relations with Saudi Arabia, it is giving serious consideration to the various matters raised by Your Majesty in recent audiences with the Ambassador.

The Ambassador adds that he has high hope that he will return from Washington with information of interest to Your Majesty.

George Wadsworth
U. S. Ambassador

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